

NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

NOBLE NUMBERS

BY

ROBERT HERRICK

TOGETHER WITH CONTEMPORARY POEMS BY

GEORGE HERBERT, DONNE

AND AN

ANONYMOUS WRITER

SELECTED AND SET TO MUSIC

FOR SOLO VOICES, CHORUS, VIOLONCELLO, AND ORCHESTRA

BY

H. WALFORD DAVIES

(OP. 28).

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NOTE.

OF the 271 short poems which *Herrick* called his NOBLE NUMBERS, eleven are here set, and two others stand as mottoes at the beginning and ending of the work. To these are added six poems by *George Herbert*, a fragment from a longer poem by *Dean Donne*, and part of an anonymous poem of the same period. Herrick's title has been retained as one not less applicable to Herbert's words than to his. It has seemed necessary to curtail those poems here numbered 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14 and 16. In the third line of No. 7 the word "Christ" has been substituted for "this." The original titles are not always given.

H. W. D.

The tears of saints more sweet by far
Than all the songs of sinners are.

NOBLE NUMBERS.

I.

* 1. 'TIS HARD TO FIND GOD.

Prelude, Quartet and Chorus.

'Tis hard to find God, but to comprehend
Him, as He is, is labour without end.

*God is hidden
from the eyes of
all living.*

2. WEIGH ME THE FIRE.

Quartet and Chorus.

Weigh me the fire; or canst thou find
A way to measure out the wind;
Distinguish all those floods that are
Mixed in the watery theatre;
And taste thou them as saltless there
As in their channel first they were.
Tell me the people that do keep
Within the kingdoms of the deep;
Or fetch me back that cloud again,
Beshivered into seeds of rain;
Tell me the motes, dust, sands and spears
Of corn when summer shakes his ears;
Shew me the world of stars, and whence
They noiseless spill their influence:
This if thou canst; then show me Him
That rides the glorious Cherubim.

† 3. THE SEARCH.

Solo Contralto.

Whither, O, whither art Thou fled,
My Lord, my Love?
My searches are my daily bread;
Yet never prove.

*God dwelleth in
light
unapproachable,
Him no man
hath seen nor
can see.*

My knees pierce th' earth, mine eyes the sky;
And yet the sphere
And centre both to me deny
That Thou art there.

I sent a sigh to seek Thee out,
Deep drawn in pain,
Wing'd like an arrow: but my scout
Returns in vain.

Where is my God; what hidden place
Conceals Thee still?
What covert dare eclipse Thy face?
Is it Thy will?

* NOS. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15A, and 17 are by HERRICK.

† NOS. 3, 10, 13, 14, 16, and 18 are by HERBERT.

4. GOD'S DWELLING.

*Unaccompanied Chorus.**Gods' Presence
perceived.*

God's said to dwell there, wheresoever He
 Puts down some prints of His High Majesty :
 As when to man He comes, and there doth place
 His Holy Spirit, or doth plant His grace.

5. GRACE FOR A CHILD.

*Solo Soprano.**His Spirit
discerned in any
little child ;*

Here a little child I stand,
 Heaving up my either hand ;
 Cold as paddocks though they be,
 Here I lift them up to Thee,
 For a benison to fall
 On our meat, and on us all. *Amen.*

6. TO THE SAVIOUR, A CHILD.

*Solo Contralto.**But, above all, in
the Holy Child
of Bethlehem.*

Go, pretty child, and bear this flower
 Unto thy little Saviour :
 And tell Him, by that bud now blown,
 He is the Rose of Sharon known :
 And tell Him (for good handsel too)
 That thou hast brought a whistle new,
 Made of a clean straight oaten reed,
 To charm His cries, (at time of need :)
 Tell Him, for coral, thou hast none ;
 But if thou hadst He should have one ;
 But poor thou art, and known to be
 Even as moniless as He.

7. WHAT SWEETER MUSIC.

*Solo Soprano and Semi-Chorus.**In praise of the
Christ.*

What sweeter music can we bring
 Than a carol for to sing
 The birth of Christ, our heavenly King ?
 Awake the voice ! Awake the string !
 Heart, ear, and eye, and every thing
 Awake ! the while the active finger
 Runs division with the singer.

[From the flourish they come to the song.]

Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
 And give the honour to the day
 That sees December turned to May.

Why does the chilling winter's morn
 Smile, like a field beset with corn ?

'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth
 Gives life and lustre, public mirth
 To Heaven and the under-earth.

We see Him come, and know Him ours,
 Who, with His sunshine and His showers,
 Turns all the patient ground to flowers.

* 8. A ROYAL GUEST.

*Recit. Bass.**Christ comes to
man, and is yet
received as a
stranger.*

Yet if his majesty our sovereign lord
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say "I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! "Let no man idle stand."
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
But at the coming of the King of Heaven,
All's set at six and seven:
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And as at first still lodge Him in the manger.

9. CHRIST'S PART.

*Choral Aria, with Quartet.**He requires the
heart.*

Christ He requires still, wheresoe'er He comes
To feed or lodge, to have the best of rooms:
Give Him the choice; grant Him the nobler part
Of all the house: the best of all's the heart.

II.

10. HOW SHOULD I PRAISE THEE.

*Trio (Tenor, Baritone, and Bass) and Men's Chorus.**The wavering
spirit longs for
constancy*

How should I praise Thee, Lord! how should my rhymes
Gladly engrave Thy love in steel,
If what my soul doth feel sometimes,
My soul might ever feel!

Although there were some forty heavens, or more,
Sometimes I peer above them all:
Sometimes I hardly reach a score,
Sometimes to hell I fall.

Yet take Thy way; for sure Thy way is best:
Stretch or contract me, Thy poor debtor:
This is but tuning of my breast,
To make the music better.

Whether I fly with angels, fall with dust,
Thy hands made both, and I am there:
Thy power and love, my love and trust
Make one place everywhere.

11. THE BELL-MAN.

*Solo Bass.**A midnight
warning.*

Along the dark and silent night,
 With my lantern and my light,
 And the tinkling of my bell,
 Thus I walk and this I tell:
 Death and dreadfulness call on
 To the general session;
 To whose dismal bar we there
 All accounts must come to clear:
 Scores of sins we've made here many,
 Wiped out few (God knows) if any.
 Rise, ye debtors, then, and fall
 To make payment while I call.
 Ponder this, when I am gone.
 By the clock 'tis almost one.

12. LITANY: TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

*Quartet and Chorus.**Man's spirit
appeals for
comfort in
trial*

In the hour of my distress,
 When temptations me oppress,
 And when I my sins confess,
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

When the house doth sigh and weep,
 And the world is drowned in sleep,
 Yet mine eyes their watch do keep;
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

When (God knows) I'm tossed about,
 Either with despair or doubt;
 Yet before the glass be out,
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

When the judgment is revealed
 And that opened which was sealed,
 When to Thee I have appealed;
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

13. THE REVOLT.

*Solo Tenor.**An inner voice
prevails through
the utmost
rebellion.*

I struck the board and cried, No more.
 I will abroad.
 What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
 My lines of life are free; free as the road,
 Loose as the wind, as large a store.
 Shall I be still in suit?
 Have I no harvest but a thorn
 To let me blood, and not restore
 What I have lost with cordial fruit?
 Sure there was wine
 Before my sighs did dry it: there was corn
 Before my tears did drown it.
 Is the year only lost to me?
 Have I no bays to crown it?
 No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
 All wasted?

Not so, my heart : but there is fruit,
 And thou hast hands.
 Recover all thy sigh-blown age
 On double pleasures : leave thy cold dispute
 Of what is fit and not : forsake thy cage,
 Thy rope of sands,
 Which petty thoughts have made, and made to thee
 Good cable, to enforce and draw
 And be thy law,
 While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
 Away, take heed :
 I will abroad.
 Call in thy death's head there : tie up thy fears.
 He that forbears
 To suit and serve his need,
 Deserves his load.
 But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild,
 At every word
 Methought I heard one calling, *Child*,
 And I replied, *My Lord*.

14. HEAVEN'S ECHO.

Solo Soprano (with echo voice).

O who will show me those delights on high?

(Echo) I.

Thou, echo, thou art mortal, all men know.

(Echo) No.

Then tell me, what is that supreme delight?

(Echo) Light.

Light to the mind : what shall the will enjoy?

(Echo) Joy.

But are there cares and business with the pleasure?

(Echo) Leisure.

Light, joy and leisure ; but shall they persevere?

(Echo) Ever.

* 15. CHRIST AND THE CROSS.

Chorus.

Since Christ embraced the Cross itself, dare I,
 His image, th' image of His Cross deny?
 Would I have profit by the sacrifice,
 And dare the chosen altar to despise?
 It bore all other sins, but is it fit
 That it should bear the sin of scorning it?

15A. TO HEAVEN.

Men's Chorus (unaccompanied).

Open thy gates
 To him, who weeping waits,
 And might come in
 But that held back by sin.

Let mercy be
 So kind, to set me free,
 And I will straight
 Come in, or force the gate.

* From Donne.

*Looking
 forward.*

*Christ's Cross to
 be shared by
 men.*

16. THE CALL.

*Quartet and Chorus.**The whole-
hearted Appeal.*

Come my Way, my Truth, my Life :
 Such a Way, as gives us breath :
 Such a Truth, as ends all strife :
 Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come my Joy, my Love, my Heart :
 Such a Joy, as none can move :
 Such a Love, as none can part :
 Such a heart, as joys in love.

17. THE MASTERY.

*Orchestral Interlude.**Victory
promised.*

*No man is tempted so, but may o'ercome,
 If that he has a will to Masterdom.*

18. LET ALL THE WORLD IN EVERY CORNER
SING.*Quintet and Chorus.**Through strife to
universal praise.*

Chorus. Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King.

Verse. The heavens are not too high,
 His praise may thither fly :
 The earth is not too low,
 His praises there may grow.

Chorus. Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King.

Verse. The church with Psalms must shout,
 No door can keep them out :
 But, above all, the heart
 Must bear the longest part.

Chorus. Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King.

THE END.

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